A Brief Account of the Last Sickness and Death of Nathaniel White



James Springer White

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF NATHANIEL WHITE 4

Who Died May 6th, 1853. Rochester, N.Y.
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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF NATHANIEL WHITE

My Brother Nathaniel died of Consumption, in the City of Rochester, N.Y., May 6th, 1853, in the 22nd year of his age.*LSDNW 3.1*

In the Spring of 1842 there was a revival of religion in Palmyra, Me., and in that revival, my brother gave his young heart to the Lord, at the age of ten years, and was soundly converted. He was noted for his sobriety, and faithfulness in maintaining his profession, and continued a firm, living Christian up to the period of the great declension, about 1844. From that time until the last Autumn, he lived without the enjoyment of religion; yet was remarkable for his sound, moral principles and conscientiousness.*LSDNW 3.2*

His health had been failing for several years. And when I parted with him in Boston last October, he proposed to come to Rochester and assist in the REVIEW Office, hoping to recover his health. At this my feelings were touched. I wept, and as the train of cars were starting, hastily shook his hand, and told him that I would write. I did so, inviting him to come and live with me. I had previously sent an invitation to my sister Anna to come to Rochester, and spend some time in my family. They arrived November 26th.*LSDNW 3.3*

Before Nathaniel left Boston, he resolved to live a Christian, and when he came into my family, where all professed religion, his mind was fully prepared to engage in the worship of God. Around the altar of prayer we together bowed and prayed. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon us in such a degree, that my dear Brother praised God with a loud voice.*LSDNW 3.4*

The subject of the Sabbath immediately arrested his attention, and after carefully investigating it, he came out decidedly in favor of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. He also took great delight in the doctrine of the soon coming of Christ. But his health was all the while failing; yet no one supposed that he was so near the grave.*LSDNW 4.1*

About four weeks before his death, a change took place in his system. And although he grew weak fast, he was almost entirely

free from pain, and we hoped that it would prove for the best. As his bodily strength failed, he became more free and happy in mind. We had some of the most interesting seasons of prayer in his room that I ever enjoyed. He would join with us in praising the Lord, while his countenance, lighted up with the Spirit of God resting upon him, was expressive of the holy joy he felt. He was able to ride out and to walk from room to room. And even the afternoon that he died, he was very anxious to ride; but while putting on his overcoat he was convinced that he was too feeble. In the evening his supper was carried into his room, and he was assisted into his chair to eat. But in a few moments it was evident to all that he was sinking away in death. One that stood by told him to put his whole trust in the Lord. He looked up and smiled, and then sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, sitting in his chair, without a groan or a struggle, and without moving a limb or a muscle.*LSDNW 4.2*

A telegraphic dispatch was immediately sent to Zanesville, Ohio, to my brother John; also, to Boston, to brother Benjamin. Dispatches would have been sent to others of the family, if there had been hope of their reaching them in season. The dispatch did not reach my brother at Zanesville in season for him to be present at the funeral. Neither of my brothers came. Letters were received from them; but too late to give advice as to the funeral and burial of our dear brother. His funeral was deferred to the latest hour possible.*LSDNW 5.1*

Bro. J. N. Andrews was present at the funeral and preached a very appropriate and comforting discourse from *Revelation 14:13*. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”*LSDNW 5.2*

We then followed our dear brother to Mount Hope Cemetery, where he was placed in a vault, to remain ten days, that he might be seen if any of the relatives should come to Rochester during that time. When the time had expired, my family, with other dear friends, went to Mount Hope, and saw him placed in the silent grave. The coffin was first put in a plank box, that it might be preserved, so as to be removed to Palmyra in the Winter, if the parents should desire it.*LSDNW 5.3*

Tears of grief and joy were freely shed about that grave. To see the brother that we so much loved, buried from our sight, filled our hearts with grief; and then the “blessed hope” that soon he would rise again, caused joy and gladness. We there thought of our dear parents, brothers and sisters, and wished them with us. I had heard my dear Mother say that the day she followed little Joseph to the grave, was one of the happiest of her life. The grace of God, and the hope of meeting him again in heaven, sustained her, and caused her joy.*LSDNW 5.4*

Mother, as Anna and I stood by the grave of Nathaniel, weeping, we both expressed a wish that you were there, not only to share our grief; (and keener too; for others cannot feel a tender Mother’s grief,) but with us to rejoice in the bright hope that the voice of the Son of God would very soon open that grave, and call forth that dear son and brother, clothed in immortal beauty.*LSDNW 6.1*

We then returned to our home, feeling that our duty to that dear brother was done. As I entered the house, I saw on the table, several letters for me, one from my aged, and deeply afflicted Father, from which I copy the following:*LSDNW 6.2*

“DEAR SON:— I know not what to write you on this melancholy occasion. When I received by telegraph the news of Nathaniel’s death, I was so benumbed that I hardly knew what I was about. Although I had every reason to think his dissolution was near, by letters from yourself and Anna, yet I fondly hoped that he would recover; and the blow seemed as sudden as though he had always been in health. To think that he was gone, and all his earthly hopes blighted, (for in youth and health he had made his mark very high,) it seemed to be more than I could bear.*LSDNW 6.3*

“But when I received the particulars of his death by yours and Anna’s letters, I felt that God had done it, and he had a right; and more, he has taken him home to himself, from this world of sin, sickness and death. We cannot wish him back, especially in his weak, suffering state which he has been in for years past.*LSDNW 6.4*

“I only wish to say that I am satisfied that you have done all for him that could be done, and more than could have been done here; for

we are too old and infirm to do, or even to oversee, such help as we should have to have had here in his sickness, and that you have pursued the wisest course in his burial. I do not think much of splendid monuments. If consistent with the terms of his burying-place, I wish you to raise a humble, marble slab at his grave, with his name, age, and year of his death, and write me the expense, and I will pay it.*LSDNW 6.5*

"I do this, so that if I should be spared to pass that way, or any of my descendants, or any that have ever known him should come there, they may see where Nathaniel was buried. Benjamin thinks he ought to be brought home, and buried here. This would have been my wish, if all my six sons were to be buried here. But this is not the case. They will, no doubt, fall in different states, and be buried with their families. Out of the eleven which have composed our family, probably not more than three will be buried in Palmyra. And your Mother and I shall not be here long to watch his grave. But you and your family may go to the memorable spot, years after we are gone."*LSDNW 7.1*

This letter came in a time to touch the tenderest feelings of the soul. I also received letters from my Brother in Ohio, and my Sisters in Maine, which were a source of relief to me in that time of great affliction. Brother John writes, May 6th:*LSDNW 7.2*

"DEAR BROTHER:— Your dispatch informing me of the death of our youngest brother is but just received. This event, although long feared, has fallen suddenly and heavily upon us. To describe my feelings would be impossible. I cannot conceive of Nathaniel as lying cold in death, and habited for the grave — but as I left him in Boston, when I made him my last present, shook his hand, and heard him hope of a bright and happy future."*LSDNW 7.3*

In his postscript he asks: "Where do you bury Nathaniel? Can I be of any use to you in any way?" Again he writes, May 13th:*LSDNW 8.1*

"DEAR BRO. JAMES:— Many are the sad reflections your kind epistle, just received, has awakened. How short, how uncertain is human life — how certain is death.*LSDNW 8.2*

“Truly my good brother, you, your wife and our dear sister Anna, have passed through a severe trial. Great must have been your anxiety and care, as you were forced to see a brother sinking away from the surface of the sea of life, to be lost in the depths of the grave.*LSDNW 8.3*

“You speak of a monument. I have perfect confidence in your judgment, and that of the family; I will not dictate. I will be with you in any conclusion to which you may arrive.*LSDNW 8.4*

“This must be a severe blow to our aged parents. The youngest branch has been torn from the family tree. May Heaven support them under their severe affliction.”*LSDNW 8.5*

The following account of the particulars of Brother’s sickness and death, is from a letter written by Mrs. White to our bereaved Parents.*LSDNW 8.6*

“Dear Nathaniel, we miss him much. It seems hard for us to realize that we are no more to have his society here. He bore up through his sickness with remarkable cheerfulness and fortitude. I never heard him groan but once, and that was the Tuesday before he died. I loved him when he first came because he was brother to my husband, and I felt that I could do anything for his comfort; but soon he seemed as near to me as a natural brother. I read some in the Bible to him Wednesday, and told him about my poor brother Robert, who, after six months of great suffering, died of Consumption. Said he, ‘I should not wish to have such lingering sickness as he had.’ He enjoyed his mind well, and told us not to look sad when we came into his room. Said he, ‘I am happy; the Lord blesses me abundantly. I have obtained the victory over impatience, and have the evidence that the Lord loves and owns me as his child.’ That night he suffered much with wakefulness. He could not sleep.*LSDNW 8.7*

“Thursday morning he expressed his joy that the long night had passed, and day had finally come. As he walked out to breakfast in the large parlor that morning, he looked all around the room, and said, ‘Any one cannot help but get well in such a beautiful house as this, with such large airy rooms.’*LSDNW 9.1*

“Anna generally took his meals to him from choice, and then sat by his side while he ate; she did not wish to eat until after he had. Said he, ‘Ellen, I wish you would make Anna sit down and eat with the rest of the family, for there is no kind of need of her sitting by me while I eat.’*LSDNW 9.2*

“He seemed to love Anna very much, and through his sickness, often spoke of his coming to Rochester to accompany her, because she was so feeble, and now Anna was waiting upon him. And often said, ‘Anna, you did not know when you made up your mind to come to Rochester that you were coming to wait upon me.’*LSDNW 9.3*

“That night [Thursday] we went into his room and prayed with him, and Nathaniel was abundantly blessed. He praised the Lord aloud, while his face lighted up with the glory of God. We especially prayed that night that he might have sleep and rest. He rested very well through the night.*LSDNW 9.4*

“Friday morning, the last morning that he lived, he called us all into his room. He said that he wished us to pray there; but first, he had something to say. He then with remarkable clearness called up little things that had transpired while he had been with us, and every word that he thought he had spoken hastily or wrong, he confessed heartily. He confessed wherein he had distrusted God in times past, and asked forgiveness of the family. ‘I regret,’ said he ‘that I have been unreconciled to my sickness. I have felt that I could not have it so, and that the Lord dealt hard with me. — But I am now satisfied it is just; for nothing but this sickness could bring me where I am. God has blessed me much of late, and has forgiven me all my sins. It often seems that if I should reach out my hands I could embrace Jesus he is so near. I know I love God and he loves me’*LSDNW 9.5*

“After he had said what he wished to, we united in prayer. It was a sweet season. He manifested great interest while we were praying, responding to our prayers, saying, ‘Amen! Praise the Lord! Glory to God! I will praise him, for he is worthy to be praised! His name is Jesus, and he will save us from our sins.’*LSDNW 10.1*

“He prayed earnestly, and in faith, for a full consecration to God’s will, to be baptized with his Spirit, and purified by his blood. Said he,

‘Thou hast forgiven me all my sins, and blotted them out from thy remembrance. Thou hast sanctified me to thyself, and I will honor thee as long as I have breath.’*LSDNW 10.2*

“His face shone, and he looked very happy. He said that the room seemed light, and he loved us all. After we arose from prayer, he said, ‘Anna I love you, come here.’ She went to his bedside, and he embraced her, and said; ‘I am happy, the Lord has blessed me.’*LSDNW 10.3*

“Nathaniel was triumphant in God through the day, although he was very sick. I remained in his room and entertained him by reading the Bible and conversing with him. — As I read he would say, ‘how appropriate that is; how beautiful; I must remember that,’*LSDNW 10.4*

“I then said, Nathaniel, you are very sick. You may die in two hours, and unless God interposes, you cannot live two days. He said, very calmly, ‘O, not so soon as that, I think.’*LSDNW 10.5*

He immediately rose from the bed, sat in the rocking-chair and commenced talking. He began back to the time when he was converted, told how much he enjoyed, and how afraid he was of sinning; and then when he began to forget God, and lose the blessing. Then how high his hopes were raised; he ‘meant to be a man in the world; to get an education and fill some high station.’ And then he told how his hopes had died, as afflictions had pressed heavily upon him; how hard it was for him to give up his expectations. He said he felt he could not have it so; he *would* be well; he *would* not yield to it.*LSDNW 11.1*

“Then he spoke of the time when he was in Boston; how feeble he was; how hard he tried to bear up. And often when his labor was finished, and he went to his boarding-place, and to his room, which was up three flights of stairs, his limbs would become so weak, and his head so dizzy, that he would be obliged to hold on to the railing to keep from falling backward. And his heart would beat so violently that he would have to sit down and rest. He said that his feelings at such times were almost desperate, and that he murmured against God and thought it was cruel he could not have strength.*LSDNW 11.2*

“Then he spoke of his coming to Rochester. How trying it was to have us wait upon him, and to be dependent. ‘It seemed to me,’ said he, ‘that the kindness of you all, was more than I could bear; and I have desired to get well to pay you for all this.’ He then spoke of his embracing the Sabbath. Said he, ‘at first I was not willing to acknowledge the light I saw. I wished to conceal it; but the blessing of God was withheld from me until I acknowledged the Sabbath, Then I felt confidence towards God.’ Said he, ‘I love the Sabbath now; it is precious to me. I now feel reconciled to my sickness. I know that it is the only thing that will save me. I will praise the Lord, if he can save me through affliction.’*LSDNW 11.3*

“At our usual supper-time, we prepared poor Nathaniel’s supper, but he soon said that he was faint, and did not know but he was going to die. He sent for us, and as soon as I entered the room, I knew that he was dying, and said to him, Nathaniel, dear, trust in God, he loves you, and you love him. Trust right in him as a child trusts in its parents. Don’t be troubled. The Lord will not leave you. Said he, ‘yes, yes.’ We prayed, and he responded, ‘Amen! Praise the Lord!’ He did not seem to suffer pain. He did not groan once, or struggle, or move a muscle of his face, but breathed shorter and shorter until he fell asleep.”*LSDNW 11.4*

The following lines occasioned by my brother’s death, were written by Anna R. Smith, a member of our family.*LSDNW 12.1*

“Gone to thy rest, brother! peaceful thy sleep;
While o’er thy grave bending, in sorrow we weep,
For the loved and the cherished, in life’s early bloom,
Borne from our number, to the cold, silent tomb.
Sweet be thy slumber! in quiet repose;
Beneath the green turf, and the blossoming rose;
O, soft is thy pillow, and lowly thy bed;
Mournful the cypress, that waves o’er the dead.
Dark though the pinion, that shaded his brow,
The truth which he followed, illumined it now;
In the arms of his Saviour, he fell to his rest,
Where woes that await is, pervade not his breast.
Weep not for the Christian, whose labor is done;
Who, faithful to duty, the treasure has won.

The jewel was fitted, for ever to shine,
A gem in the casket, immortal, divine.
Not long will earth's bosom, his precious form hide,
And death's gloomy portals, from kindred divide;
For swiftly approaching, we see the bright day,
That brings the glad summons — Arise! Come away!*LSDNW 12.2*